

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9346

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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SUBJECT: NEW IRISH FINANCE AND FOREIGN MINISTERS

1. OF THE NEW IRISH CABINET, THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS ARE FINANCE MINISTER GEORGE COLLEY AND FOREIGN MINISTER MICHAEL O'KENNEDY. WE GIVE PRECEDENCE TO COLLEY BECAUSE HE IS BY ANY MEASURE THE NUMBER TWO MAN IN THE GOVERNMENT AFTER PRIME MINISTER LYNCH, BOTH BY TITLE AND INFLUENCE, BUT O'KENNEDY HAS EVERY CHANCE TO ASSUME AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT ROLE.

2. GEORGE JOSEPH COLLEY, 52, HAS BEEN A LEADING FIGURE IN IRISH POLITICS SINCE HE ENTERED THE PARLIAMENT (DAIL) IN 1961. SON OF A PROMINENT INDEPENDENCE LEADER AND POLITICIAN, COLLEY GOT AN EARLY START AS A PROTEGE OF FIANNA FAIL LEADER AND PRIME MINISTER SEAN LEMASS. HE BECAME A PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY IN 1964 AND SUBSEQUENTLY HELD CABINET POSTS AS MINISTER OF EDUCATION (1956-66), INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE (1966-70), AND FINANCE AND GAELTACHT (1970-73). DURING THE OPPOSITION PERIOD (1973-77) HE WAS SHADOW FINANCE SPOKESMAN. WHEN LEMASS RETIRED IN 1966 COLLEY PUT UP
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A GOOD FIGHT TO BECOME PARTY LEADER, BUT WAS CHECKMATED BY CHARLIE HAUGHEY AND NEIL BLANEY. HE GREACEFULLY ACCEPTED THE VICTORY OF COMPROMISE CANDIDATE JACK LYNCH AND HAS BEEN AN UNSWERVINGLY LOYAL LYNCH SUPPORTER SINCE.

3. COLLEY BRINGS SOLIDITY AND EXPERIENCE TO HIS RESUMED FINANCE PORTFOLIO, AND HIS NOW-UNCHALLENGED POSITION

AS SECOND ONLY TO LYNCH GIVES HIM CONSIDERABLE LEVERAGE. HE HAS NO ACADEMIC BACKGROUND IN ECONOMICS -- HE WAS BRIEFLY A SOLICITOR BEFORE ENTERING POLITICS-- BUT LONG YEARS IN THE JOB HAVE GIVEN HIM A READY COMMAND OF THE NECESSARY JARGON AND A FAIRLY COMPREHENSIVE THEORETICAL BASE. HOWEVER, HE IS NO MATCH IN ECONOMIC AFFAIRS TO THE RISING STAR PROFESSOR MARTIN O'DONOGHUE, WHO HAS ASSUMED THE PORTFOLIO OF ECONOMIC PLANNING. SO FAR IT SEEMS THAT COLLEY IS WILLING, AND ABLE, TO BE THE FRONT MAN FOR O'DONOGHUE'S RATHER ADVENTUROUS ECONOMIC PLANS, WHICH IN ESSENCE ARE A GAMBLE ON EUROPEAN ECONOMIC RECOVERY WHICH WILL PROVIDE A BASE FOR ENERGETIC DEFICIT SPENDING, PUMP-PRIMING, AND A KIND OF SECOND TAKE-OFF IN THE IRISH ECONOMY.

4. COLLEY HAS BEEN A DEDICATED EUROPEANIST SINCE HIS FIRST TOUR AS PART OF THE IRISH DELEGATION TO THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE IN 1964, AND ALTHOUGH HE SPEAKS NO OTHER EUROPEAN LANGUAGES BESIDES ENGLISH HE HAS HAD CONSIDERABLE EXPERIENCE IN VARIOUS EC AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL FORUMS. IN GENERAL ONE COULD DESCRIBE HIM AS PRAGMATIC BUT MILDLY CONSERVATIVE IN ECONOMIC AFFAIRS. HIS CONSERVATISM WOULD BE MOST PRONOUNCED IN LOYALTY TO FREE ENTERPRISE, DISTRUST OF GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION AND OWNERSHIP IN PRODUCTIVE SECTORS, AND CAUTION IN INTERNATIONAL MONETARY AFFAIRS.

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5. IN THE COMPLICATED IRISH POLITICAL SPHERE COLLEY IS NOW SOLIDLY ENTRENCHED AS ALMOST AN ELDER STATESMAN, HAVING OUTLASTED AND OUT-LUCKED HIS RIVALS. HE IS JOVIAL, HANDSOME, AND A GOOD IF SOMEWHAT LONG-WINDED SPEAKER. HE HAS BEEN A COMPETENT BUT UNEXCITING ADMINISTRATOR -- NO ONE REMEMBERS ANY PARTICULAR INNOVATIONS OR NEW POLICY DIRECTIONS DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO GEORGE COLLEY. HE SWIMS WITH PREVAILING CURRENTS AND KNOWS WHEN TO KEEP HIS HEAD DOWN. HE BACKED OFF, FOR INSTANCE, FROM CONFRONTATION WITH THE CHURCH AFTER A PROMISING BEGINNING IN THE EDUCATION MINISTRY. HE IS, LIKE VIRTUALLY ALL IRISH POLITICIANS, A CLOSE FRIEND AND ADMIRER OF THE U.S. AND HAS VISITED THE U.S. MANY TIMES. TO SUM HIM UP, COLLEY IS A SEASONED POLITICIAN POPULAR AND WITH ALL THE CREDENTIALS, NOT BRILLIANT BUT SOLID, AND LOOKS LIKE THE HEIR APPARENT IF JACK LYNCH GIVES OVER THE LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE NEXT 8 YEARS.

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6. MICHAEL O'KENNEDY, 40, IS A NOVUS HOMO COMPARED TO MOST OF HIS COLLEAGUES. LIKE MANY IRISH POLITICIANS HE GOT A START BY COMING FROM A FAMILY PROMINENT IN THE 1916-21 INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE. HE BECAME FIRST A SENATOR AND RATHER WELL-KNOWN TELEVISION PERSONALITY, THEN TRIUMPHANTLY ENTERED THE DAIL IN 1965. HIS MASSIVE AND WELL-TENDED POLITICAL BASE IN TIPPERARY IS ONE OF THE BASTIONS OF FIANNA FAIL, AND WAS THE INITIAL REASON-ALONG WITH OBVIOUS TALENT - WHY JACK LYNCH PUSHED HIM FORWARD RAPIDLY TO THE FRONT BENCH. HE BECAME PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY IN 1970 AND MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND POWER FOR THREE MONTHS JUST PRIOR TO THE FIANNA FAIL DEFEAT IN MARCH, 1973. WITH BRIAN LENIHAN'S SURPRISING DEFEAT FOR A PARLIAMENT SEAT IN THE 1973 ELECTION JACK LYNCH NAMED O'KENNEDY AS THE SHADOW SPOKESMAN FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS. AT FIRST IT SEEMED LIKE A WOLF-LAMB SITUATION AS O'KENNEDY WAS REGULARLY AND THOROUGHLY WIPED OUT IN DEBATE BY THE BRILLIANT GARRET FITZGERALD, FOREIGN MINISTER PAR EXCELLENCE. O'KENNEDY HOWEVER, HAS GROWN IN THE JOB. HIS RATHER TYPICAL IRISH EDUCATION THROUGH UNIVERSITY AND LAW SCHOOL INCLUDED A ATYPICAL STINT ON THE CONTINENT, MOSTLY IN SWITZERLAND, WHERE HE BECAME

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FLUENT IN FRENCH AND ITALIAN WITH SOME FACILITY IN GERMAN. DURING THE SHADOW YEARS OF 1973-77 HE TRAVELLED MUCH THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, INCLUDING A LONG VISIT TO THE

SOVIET UNION. HE COUNTS HIS MEMBERSHIP IN THE TRI-LATERAL COMMISSION, AND A RESULTING ACQUAINTANCE WITH PRESIDENT CARTER AND ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI, AS THE HIGH POINT OF HIS EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATION IN THESE YEARS.

7. OF ALL THE NEW CABINET MINISTERS MICHAEL O'KENNEDY IS PROBABLY THE BEST KNOWN, PERSONALLY, TO EMBASSY OFFICERS. WE HAVE HAD A CLOSE DIALOGUE, MANY INFORMAL LUNCHEONS, ETC., BUT HE IS PERHAPS THE MOST DIFFICULT OF ALL TO ANALYZE. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF CHARLIE HAUGHEY HE IS UNDOUBTEDLY THE MOST INTELLIGENT OF THE NEW CABINET. SOMEWHAT LIKE FITZGERALD HE IS A VORACIOUS CONSUMER OF WRITTEN MATERIAL, AND HAS AN ENCYCLOPEDIA KNOWLEDGE OF WORLD AFFAIRS. HOWEVER, UNLIKE FITZGERALD HE DOES NOT YET SEEM TO HAVE THE FACILITY OF SYNTHESIS AND INSTANT ARTICULATE VERBAL MASTERY OF THE MYRIAD AFFAIRS INVOLVED IN THE FOREIGN MINISTER TRADE. HE APPROACHES MANY SUBJECTS WITH TOO MANY WORDS, GRADUALLY HOMING-IN WITH CONCENTRIC CIRCLES, AND HAS BEEN KNOWN TO LULL TO SLEEP ALMOST THE ENTIRE DAY, ACCUSTOMED AS IT IS TO VACUOUS BLARNEY. IN SMALL GROUPS, HOWEVER, HE IS WITTY, CHARMING, AND PERSUASIVE. CERTAIN INFORMANTS TELL US THAT HE HAS GREAT SEX APPEAL WITH THE LADIES. HE HAS A DYNAMIC, FORCEFUL PERSONALITY, IS A SELF-ASSURED INDIVIDUAL, AND ALWAYS DOES HIS HOMEWORK THOROUGHLY. THUS ANY EUROPEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS WHO EXPECT TO RELAX AFTER THE STRONG ACT OF GARRET FITZGERALD MUST PREPARE FOR ANOTHER FAIRLY STRONG ROARING MOUSE FROM THIS POOREST OUTPOST OF THE EC CLUB.

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8. SINCE PRIME MINISTER LYNCH TAKES LITTLE INTEREST IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS EXCEPT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND (ONLY QUASI-FOREIGN), IT WILL BE IMPORTANT TO CULTIVATE AND UNDERSTAND O'KENNEDY'S THINKING ON FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES. MOST ARE PREDICTABLY SET BECAUSE OF IRELAND'S SELF-INTEREST: E.G. A STRONG PITCH FOR FURTHER POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INTEGRATION IN THE E.C.; CAUTIOUS GO-SLOWISM ON NEW EC MEMBERS; FIERCE ADVOCACY OF FISHING RIGHTS; MOVEMENT TOWARD GREATER ECONOMIC SEPERATION FROM THE UK; AND GENERAL POLITICAL COOPERATION WITH THE EC IN VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL FORUMS. ON EAST-WEST ISSUES O'KENNEDY HAS HAD AMBIVALENT ATTITUDES. HE IS ON RECORD, PRIVATELY AT A LUNCHEON IN THE EMBASSY, IN FAVOR OF A POSSIBLE ENTRY OF IRELAND INTO NATO -- THIS POSITION APPEARS TO HAVE COME FROM TRILATERAL COMMISSION DISCUSSIONS AND A RATHER DETAILED PERSONAL ANALYSIS OF IRELAND'S ROLE IN EUROPE AND THE WORLD. IN CONTRADICTION HE SPEAKS VAGUELY ABOUT IRELAND'S QUOTE NEUTRAL UNQUOTE POSITION AS BEING OF VALUE IN EAST-

WEST AND DEVELOPED-LDC CONTEXTS. ON HUMAN RIGHTS THIS
YOUNG FOREIGN MINISTER SEEMS TO TAKE A STRONG MORAL
POSITION. HE TRAINED AT ONE PERIOD FOR THE PRIESTHOOD
AND IS A DEVOUT CHURCH-GOING CHRISTIAN. WE WOULD EXPECT
THAT IN THE CSCE CONTEXT HE WOULD CONTINUE IRELAND'S
STAND WITHIN THE EC IN FAVOR OF A STRONG POSITION ON
BASKET III. O'KENNEDY HAS TOLD US THAT HE IS QUOTE
HORRIFIED UNQUOTE BY THE WHOLE SOVIET CONCEPT AFTER HIS
TOUR OF THE SOVIET UNION.

9. AT THE AGE OF 40, MICHAEL O'KENNEDY IS BOTH RE-
LATIVELY NEW IN IRISH POLITICS AND INEXPERIENCED IN
EUROPEAN AND WORLD DIPLOMACY. JACK LYNCH HAS GIVEN
HIM THE GAGUGE. HE IS ENTHUSIASTIC, INTELLIGENT, AND,
IN MILTON'S PHRASE, HAS ALL THE WORLD BEFORE HIM. WE
EXPECT A GOOD PERFORMANCE. RENDAHL

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